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William Rotch

OF NANTUCKET

By

AUGUSTINE JONES

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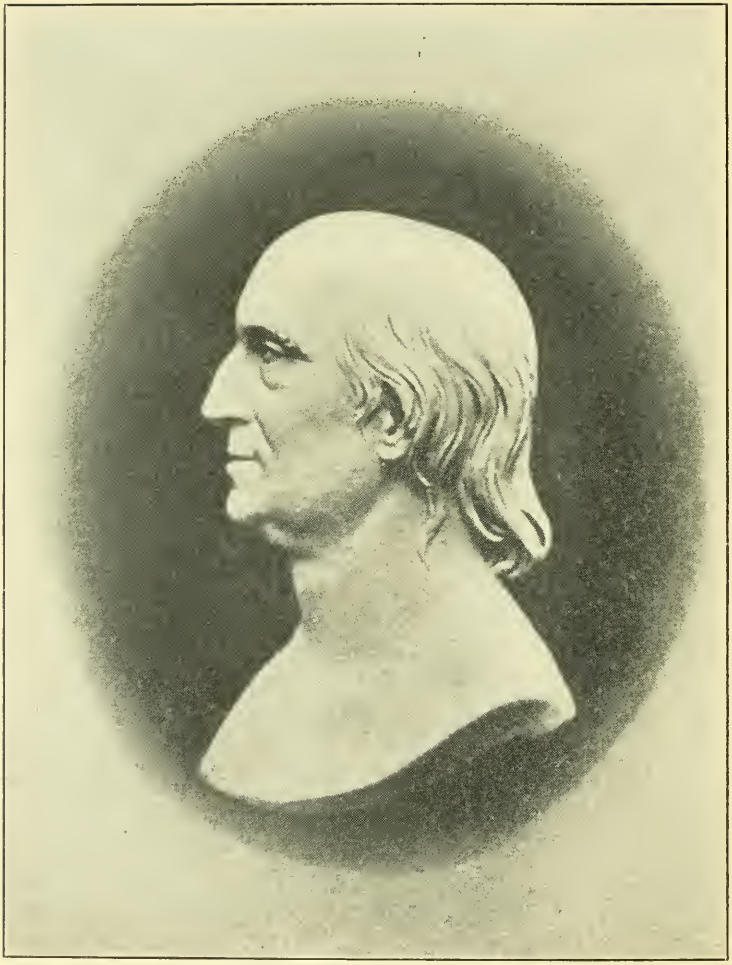


WILLIAM ROTCH.

From The American Friend of Fifth month 2 and 9, 1901.

WILLIAM ROTCH.

BY AUGUSTINE JONES.

The career of a man who was possessed of strong, individual character, tempered by sincere and deep religious convictions, with tender conscience, who, with master-strokes, established and built up great industries and influenced from his center the business of the world, ought never to be lost sight of. His worthy example is the heritage of mankind, to be cherished in the perpetual annals of the race. We owe vastly more to the heroes of invention and of enterprise, who have clothed and fed the multitude and spread before the entire world the light of modern civilization than to the whole race of violent men who have changed again and again the map of the world, whose vain-glorious chronicles are the staple of history, far beyond their merit or usefulness.

William Rotch, a distinguished member of the Society of Friends, was born in 1734 in the island of Nantucket, Mass. His father, John Rotch (1704-84), his brother Francis, both Friends, were, like himself, largely interested in the whale fishery and shipping, early in Nantucket and later in New Bedford. This

family did much to make Nantucket for a time the greatest center of this fishery in the world. Sperm oil then was the material which produced the most perfect known light, in cot or palace, and also reduced friction in machinery. It was then thought that nothing could ever take its place; but the world has since received more light on that subject.

The island of Nantucket, during the Revolutionary War, was exposed to destruction from both English and Americans, and the fact that most of the inhabitants were non-combatants and not prepared to take arms against the mother country increased their peril at home, but saved them in the end.

William Rotch says: "From the year 1775 to the end of the war we were in continual embarrassments. Our vessels were captured by the English, and our small vessels and boats sent to the continent for provisions denied and sent back empty under pretense that we supplied the British, which was without the least foundation. Prohibitory laws were often made in consequence of these reports, unfounded as they were. By this inhuman conduct we were sometimes in danger of being starved."

He has given to us in his own language an interesting incident of his experience. . . . He had a lot of muskets taken for debt, with bayonets on them. He readily sold the muskets to whalers, who used them on their voyages to kill wild fowl. But he always reserved the bayonets, for their only use was to kill men. The bayonets were neglected and forgotten,

P.
Author.
(Person).

until an application was made for them from the continent for use in war.

He says: "The time had now come to support our testimony against war or forever abandon it. As this very instrument was a severe test, I would not hesitate, and therefore promptly denied the applicant. My reasons for not furnishing the bayonets were demanded, to which I readily answered: 'As this instrument is purposely made and used for the destruction of mankind, and I cannot put into one man's hand to destroy another that which I cannot use myself in the same way, I refuse to comply with thy demand.' The person left me, much dissatisfied. Others came and received the same denial. It made a great noise in the country, and my life was threatened. I would gladly have beaten them into 'pruning-hooks.' As it was, I took an early opportunity of throwing them into the sea."

The Committee of the General Court soon took him to Watertown for investigation. He says: "I gave a full account of my proceedings, and closed it by saying: 'I sank them in the bottom of the sea. I did it from principle. I have ever been glad that I had done it. If I have done wrong, I am to be pitied.' The chairman of the committee, one Major Hawley (a worthy character), then addressed the committee and said: 'I believe Mr. Rotch has given us a candid account of the affair, and every man has a right to act consistently with his religious principles. But I am sorry we cannot have the bayonets,

for we want them very much.' The Major was desirous of knowing more of our Friends' principles, on which I informed him as far as he inquired. One of the committee (Judge Paine), in a pert manner, observed, 'Then, your principles are passive obedience and non-resistance?' I replied, 'No, my friend; our principles are active obedience or passive suffering.' I passed through no small trial on account of my bayonets, and the clamor long continued against me."

His brother Francis owned the ship "Dartmouth," from which the tea was thrown into Boston harbor Twelfth month 16th, 1773. She was the first vessel built in New Bedford. Francis was then only 23 years old, and had his property in her, doubtless, from his Quaker father. The citizens of Boston would not let him land the tea, and the royal colonial Governor Hutchinson would not let him return it to England. The citizens on that day were in mass meeting in the old South Meeting House, on Washington Street, corner of Milk Street, now standing in good repair. Young Rotch interceded, now with the Governor out at Milton, and now with the people—all in vain. Neither would yield. It was 6 o'clock p.m. when Rotch reported the last time to the meeting that the Governor was obstinate, and he could do no more. There were seven thousand people collected. Samuel Adams, the soul of the rebellion, arose and said: "This meeting can do nothing more to save the country." Instantly a shout was

heard at the porch; the war-whoop resounded, and a band of forty or fifty men, disguised as Indians, rushed by the door.

The population of Nantucket in 1775 was 4,500; it was in 1890, 3,268. The people of the earlier date were mostly Friends, as appears in the court record of that period. . . . There were then one hundred and fifty vessels from that place employed in the whale fishery, which in number then led the world.

There was a civil embargo in 1777 which prevented vessels from leaving Nantucket, which was raised by an order of Council of Massachusetts upon petition, and upon condition of "being wholly manned by Quakers." He says, in the following year, "people not Friends murmured against me. They considered me the principal cause that we did not join in the war (which I knew was measurably the case), when we might have been plentifully supplied, but now were likely to starve—little considering that if we had taken part there was nothing but supernatural aid (which we had no reason to expect) that could have prevented our destruction. . . . My affliction seemed more than I could bear; but, sustained by that good Hand which had so often been my deliverer, after shedding a flood of tears, my mind was more easy and my spirits revived."

"In the year 1779, seven British armed vessels and transports, with troops from Newport, came to us. . . . They plundered us of much property—some from me." Soon after, the town appointed a com-

mittee, consisting of William Rotch and two others, to represent its case to the commander of the army and navy. This committee went at once to Newport, where Captain Dawson commanded the navy and General Prescott the army. They succeeded, through great peril and extraordinary energy, in landing, against the protest of Captain Dawson. William Rotch says: "I got on shore in the afternoon and found that I must wait on General Prescott. Knowing his brittle temper, and being in the afternoon, I almost dreaded to appear in his presence. However, let my treatment be what it would, I desired the meeting over.

"I was introduced by one of his aids. He received me very cordially, gave me his hand and said, 'Mr. Rotch, will you have some dinner? I can give you good bread, though the rebels say we have none.' I thanked him, saying I had dined. 'Well,' said he, 'will you have a glass of wine?' He did not object to the wine—it was then in common use—but objected to the ceremonies. He said he meant no disrespect. Gen. Prescott answered, 'Oh, no; if a Quaker will be a Quaker, it is all I want of him.' After some conversation, I mentioned that I did not wish to intrude further on his time, and rose to retire. 'Oh, no,' says he, 'you must take some coffee.' I accepted his kindness and gladly retired."

The committee could effect nothing, however, without going to New York, where they were well received and accomplished very much. He says:

"We applied to Sir Henry Clinton, through one of his aids, Major André, that fine young man who lost his life as a spy."

"I now came to the most trying scene in my whole experience during the war. I was impeached, with four others, for high treason, by Thomas Jenkins, when there was no step between being clear and death." This arose from his efforts to be let alone in Nantucket by the British and not further molested by them. The story of his examination and trial in Boston is a thrilling one. It finally came before the General Court of Massachusetts. The House cleared them, the Senate held them, "thus playing with our lives as with a tennis ball," he says; but they were soon released.

A change of admirals in New York again exposed Nantucket to British marauders, and again William Rotch and a committee sought peace in a visit to New York, and again succeeded in securing assurances of safety. His own words respecting this trip are interesting: "It was proposed to me to go with two others. I had been then confined nearly nine months with rheumatism, had just left my crutches, and was hobbling about with a cane; therefore I could not think of such an undertaking. But all others utterly refused to go unless I would accompany them. This brought a great strait upon my mind. Go, I thought, I could not, and to omit it seemed almost inevitable destruction. At last I consented, under great apprehension that I should not live to return."

He was captured by a British privateer, with two women and two men Friends, on his way to Sandwich Quarterly Meeting in his own vessel, but he saved his vessel and recovered some other property taken from them, a few days later. William Rotch and a committee proceeded to Congress in Philadelphia and secured concessions of great importance to Nantucket, but peace soon came between the two countries. The United States was severed from Great Britain. William Rotch had himself lost $60,000 by this war—a great sum at that time—which loss nearly ruined him financially.

William Rotch was a representative to New England Yearly Meeting in 1782, at Newport. He signed as clerk, on behalf of a committee of great importance in the organization and government of the Yearly Meeting in 1783, a report of the dignity almost of discipline, indicating his personal weight in the meeting.

William Rotch was the owner of the famous ship "Bedford," of Nantucket, which had the honor of first displaying the American flag in British waters. There is a certain rich and racy relish to the following narration of an English historian of the period, who seemed to chronicle with some disdain:

"The ship 'Bedford,' Captain Mooers, belonging to the Massachusetts, arrived in the Downes on the 3d of February, 1783, and was reported at the custom house on the 6th instant. She was not allowed regular entry until some consultation had taken place be-

tween the commissioners of the customs and the Lords of Council, on account of the many acts of Parliament in force against the rebels of America. She was loaded with four hundred and eighty-seven butts of whale oil, is American-built, manned wholly by American seamen and belongs to the island of Nantucket, in Massachusetts. This is the first vessel which has displayed the thirteen rebellious stripes of America in any British port."—Barnard's "History of England," "Cyclopœdia of United States History," Vol. I., p. 493.

No doubt the trouble at the custom house arose from the fact that the definitive treaty of peace between the two countries was not signed at Paris until Ninth month 3d, 1783, seven months after this event, but provisional articles of peace were signed at Paris Eleventh month 30th, 1782, so that the energetic merchant had reasonable ground for his adventure. It is a notable fact that the "Dartmouth," which lost the tea, was owned by Francis, and that the "Bedford" was owned by his brother.

He was prominent in 1784 in New England Yearly Meeting, being on the Executive Committee which directed its business, and also on the committee to consider the state of the Society and devise measures for improvement. This was the first year of the Providence Friends School, which began at Portsmouth, R. I. He was a strong patron of it.

Great Britain was in 1785 "the only market of any consequence for sperm oil." . . . The heavy

"alien duties" against American oil ruined the business in America. It now sold at £17 to the ton, which had previously been sold at £30. It cost £25 to produce it. Nothing remained to a practical, thrifty man but to follow the market into England, and that he tried to do. He therefore, with his son Benjamin, who was destined to remain abroad permanently, sailed from Nantucket Seventh month 4th, 1785, in his own ship, "Maria," William Mooers, master, who, I suppose, commanded the "Bedford" two years before.

They had a fine passage of twenty-three days. He first visited the coast from Southampton to Falmouth for ports suitable to his purpose, and decided on Falmouth. He visited the grave of his brother at Bristol, who had died there eighteen years before.

He says: "My next object was to know what encouragement we could obtain from the British Government. My friend Robert Barclay [the great-grandson probably of the apologist], perceiving what my business was, spoke to Harry Beaufoy, a member of Parliament, who introduced me to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the great William Pitt, then about 27 years of age. He received me politely and heard me patiently. I laid before him our ruinous situation, saying, 'When the war commenced we declared against taking part in it and strenuously adhered to this determination, thus placing ourselves as a neutral island. Nevertheless, you have taken from us about two hundred sail of vessels, valued at £200,000 ster-

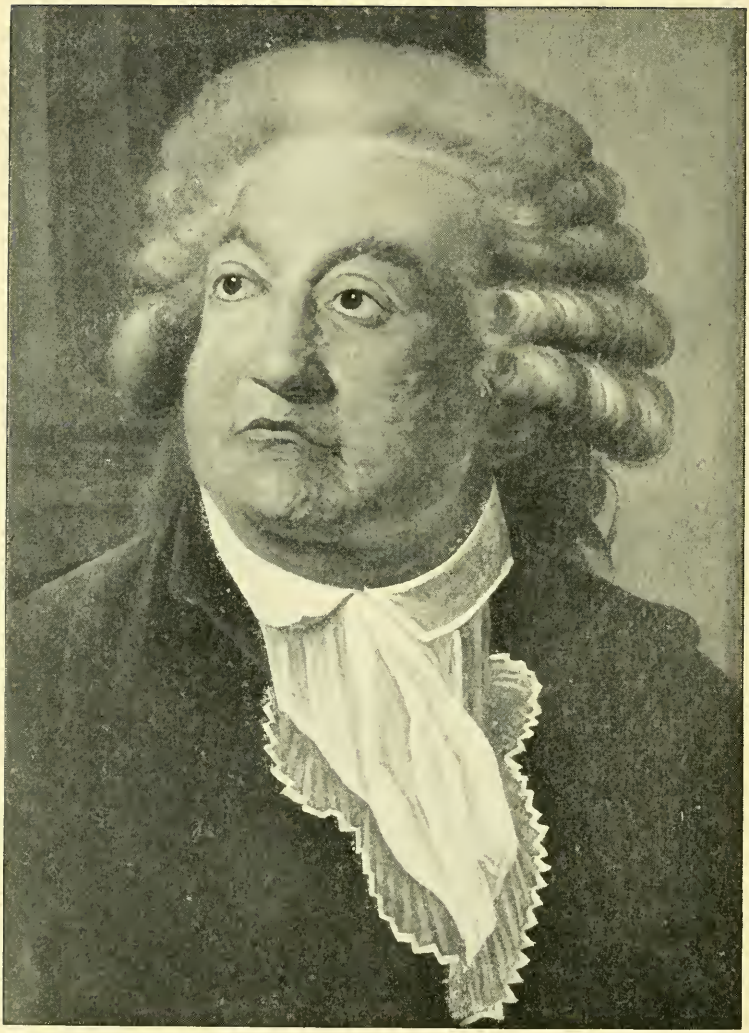
ling, unjustly and illegally. Had the war been founded on a general declaration against America, we should have been included; but it was predicated on a rebellion; consequently, none could have been included in it but such as were in arms, or those that were aiding such. We have done neither. As a proof of our being without the reach of your declaration, you sent commissioners to restore peace to America, in which any province, county or town that should make submission and receive pardon should be reinstated in its former situation. As we had not offended, we had no submission to make or pardon to ask; and certainly it is very hard if we do not stand on better ground than those who have offended; consequently, we remained a part of your dominions until separated by the peace.' This last sentence I pressed very closely whenever I, with propriety, could introduce it, knowing it was a material point. After I had done, he paused some time and then answered: 'Undoubtedly you are right, sir. Now, what can we do for you?' I told him that, in the present situation of things, the principal part of our inhabitants must leave the island. Some would go into the country. A part wish to continue the whale fishery wherever it can be pursued to advantage; therefore, my chief business is to lay our distressed situation before this nation, and to ascertain if the fishery is an object worth giving such encouragement for removal to England as the subject deserves. Thus our conversation ended." He waited

four months for an answer. They then appointed Lord Hawkesbury to confer with him—a great enemy to America. They would not permit the introduction into England of American-built ships.

He then went to Dunkirk, in France, a most excellent port, and received from the French Government twice as much, most graciously granted by it, as he had asked of the English. When it was too late he received the following through a secretary: "You are at liberty to agree with us, and I am authorized by Mr. Pitt to tell you that you may make your own terms." He was already settled at Dunkirk with two ships, which were soon increased to fifty. He formed a partnership at Dunkirk, consisting of himself, his son Benjamin and son-in-law, Samuel Rodman.

He now returned to his home in America, after an absence of eighteen months, arriving First month 1st, 1787. He remained in America four years and returned then to Dunkirk to visit his sons and attend to the business.

There were several civil and religious questions, important both to the Friends at Dunkirk and to those at Congenies, in the south of France, and elsewhere, which seemed seriously to require the decision of the National Assembly. They related to religious liberty, military service, oaths and registration of births, deaths and marriages. The Friends, north and south, united in a petition, presented on the 10th day of Second month, 1791, to the Assembly. Sir



MIRABEAU.

Edward Fry declares this event to have been "a curious episode in Quaker history." It seems to us more than curious. There was an awful sublimity in the announcement of such great truths in this petition as with the voice of God, to that Assembly, at that moment on the brink of the most terrible catastrophe in history. The answer of Mirabeau, the President, contains enough of the petition to make it understood. Mirabeau only lived one month and twenty-two days after the following speech, dying at 42 years of age. The one man who, if anybody, could have saved his country was able to do it standing with the monarchy in one hand and the turbulent democracy in the other; with the confidence of both, he, more than any other man, was then the hope of France. There was another eminent man aiding the Friends that day—Jean Pierre Brissot (de Warville) ("North American Review," Vol. 38, p. 177). He was the master spirit of the Girondists, who were the flower of the revolution, a martyr, who strove to stay the hand of violence.

THE ANSWER OF MIRABEAU.*

"Quakers, who have fled from persecutors and tyrants, cannot but address with confidence those legis-

* The portrait of Mirabeau, which appears in this number is a copy of a noted painting in the collection at Bowdoin College, Me. James Bowdoin, of Boston, Mass., son of Governor Bowdoin, for whom the college was named, was from 1806 to

lators who have, for the first time in France, made the rights of mankind the basis of the laws. And France, now reformed—France, in the bosom of peace (which she will always consider herself bound to revere, and which she wishes to all other nations), may become another happy Pennsylvania.

"As a system of philanthropy we admire your principles. They remind us that the origin of every society was a family united by its manners, its affections and its wants; and, doubtless, those would certainly be the most sublime institutions which would renew the human race and bring them back to this primitive and virtuous original.

"The examination of your principles, as a matter of opinion, no longer concerns us; we have decided

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1808 a United States Commissioner to treat with Spain, during Jefferson's administration, residing at the time in Paris. He made a very valuable collection of paintings, having rare facilities for securing choice works of art, and at his decease, in 1811, these treasures were all left to the college.

The painter of this picture is unknown, but the perfect likeness determines at once that Mirabeau was the subject depicted. An able critic has said of it, that the painter "was a man of unusual power, having many characteristics of Rembrandt and the masters of later schools. The painting is almost startling in its realism, broad in handling, fresh and vigorous in technique."

It exalts our interest in this work of art and its associations, when we remember that the students of this institution since 1811 have always cherished this picture as one of the richest gems worn modestly, but proudly, on the radiant form of their nurse of happiest years.

on that point. There is a kind of property which no man would put into the common stock—the motions of his soul, the freedom of his thought. In this sacred domain man is placed in a hierarchy far above the social state. As citizen, he must adopt a form of government; but as a thinking being, he has no country but the universe.

"As principles of religion, your doctrines will not be the subject of our deliberation. The relation of every man to the Supreme Being is independent of all political institutions. Between God and the heart of man what government would dare to interpose?

"As civil maxims, your claims must be submitted to the discussion of the legislative body. We will examine whether the forms you observe in order to certify births and marriages be sufficient to authenticate those descents which the division of property renders necessary, independently of good morals.

"We will consider whether a declaration, subject to the penalties against false witnesses and perjury, be not in fact an oath.

"Worthy citizens, you have already taken that civic oath which every man deserving of freedom regards as a privilege rather than a duty. You have not taken God to witness, but you have appealed to your consciences. And is not a pure conscience a heaven without a cloud? Is not that part of man a ray of the divinity?

"You also say that one of your religious tenets forbids you to take up arms or to kill on any pretence

whatsoever. It is certainly a noble philosophical principle, which thus does a kind of homage to humanity. But consider well, whether the defense of yourselves and your equals be not also a religious duty. Would you, then, have remained subject to tyrants? Since we have procured liberty for you, and for ourselves, why should you refuse to preserve it?

"Had your brethren in Pennsylvania been less remote from the savages would they have suffered their wives, their children, their parents, to be massacred rather than resist? And are not stupid tyrants and ferocious conquerors also savages?

"The Assembly will, in its wisdom, consider all your requests. But whenever I meet a Quaker, I shall say:

"'My brother, if thou hast a right to be free, thou hast a right to prevent any one from making thee a slave. As thou lovest thy fellow-creature, suffer not a tyrant to destroy him; it would be killing him thyself. Thou desirest peace, but consider—weakness invites war. General resistance would prove a universal peace.'

"The Assembly invites you to stay its sitting."

It is not to be expected that Mirabeau would hold the views of a convinced Friend on war and oaths, but his candor and his lofty ideals of soul liberty are attractive and inspiring.

"The respectful petition of the Christian Society of Friends called Quakers," which the

President of the Assembly answered in the foregoing words, was prepared mostly by John Marsillac in the French language, and read by him to the Assembly. He was a convinced Friend of Congenies, or that neighborhood, of exalted station in life and ample means. He had been sent as a highly-accredited Friend from the Friends in Congenies to the Friends in London in 1785, bearing an excellent epistle, signed by forty brethren. ("London Friend," Vol. 3, p. 78.) He wrote in 1793 a letter full of true light and life to Robert Grubb and others. (See the same volume of "London Friend," page 253.) He was the author of a life of William Penn, in French, published in Paris in two volumes in 1791. We believe that the following graphic description of these matters from the pen of William Rotch himself will furnish the richest and most salutary finish to the narration:

He says: "Early in 1791 [Second month 10th] I was called upon, with my son, to attend the National Assembly at Paris. We were joined by John Marsillac in presenting the petition to that body for some privileges and exemptions connected with our religious principles. The petition was drawn up by John Marsillac before we reached Paris, and notice given that it must be presented next day. On perusing it we found some material alterations necessary, and, in some instances, it was difficult to express in French the alterations we had made in English without losing their force. My not understanding the

French language, it was impossible to have such expressions as I thought necessary inserted; and the time was so short that we were obliged to let it pass with much fewer amendments than I wished.

"The hour was come for presenting it, and the previous notice given of the 'Quaker petition,' I suppose, drew every member in town to his seat. The galleries for spectators were filled, and many could not be accommodated; nor did we wonder at the curiosity, considering the novelty of the subject.

"We had been with Brissot de Warville, Clavier and some others, looking over the petition until the latest moment, and must now proceed to the Assembly. They, with several others, had come to accompany us, and just as we were moving some one observed, 'You have no cockades; you must put them on.' We told them we could not. It was a distinguishing badge we could not make use of. 'But,' said they, 'it is required by law to prevent distinctions, that people may not be abused, for their lives are in danger without them.' There was always a large body of the lower classes about the Assembly that we had to pass through. We replied that we could not do it, whatever might be the consequences; that we were willing to go as far as we could, and if stopped we must submit to it. We saw that our friends were full of fear for our safety. We set out with no small apprehension, but we trusted in that Power which can turn the hearts of men as a watercourse is turned. We passed through the great con-

course without interruption, and reached the waiting room of the Assembly. A messenger informed the President of our arrival, and we were immediately called to the bar.

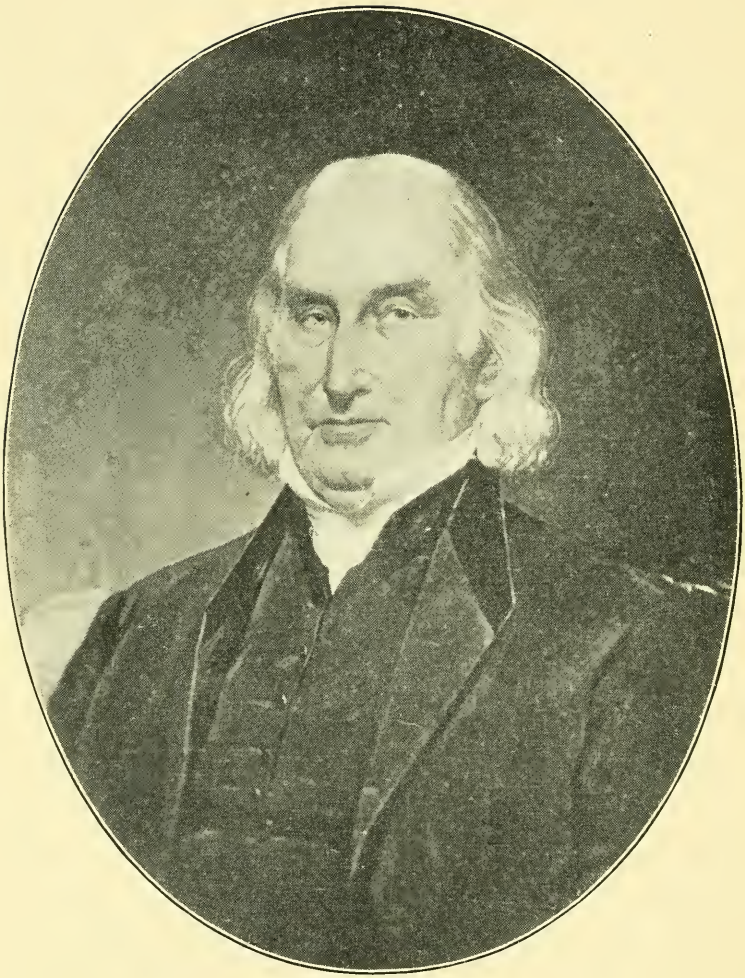
"John Marsillac read the petition, with Brissot at his elbow to correct him in his emphasis, which he frequently did, unperceived, I believe, by all except ourselves. At the close of every subject there was a general clapping of hands, and the officers endeavoring to hush them. The hushing I thought was hissing, from my ignorance of the language, and I apprehended all was going wrong, until better informed. After the reading was concluded, the President Mirabeau read his answer. The clapping was repeated at the end of every subject. At the close the President said: 'The Assembly invites you to stay its sitting.' As we were passing to the seats assigned to us, a person touched Benjamin and said, 'I am rejoiced to see something of your principles brought before the Assembly.' He did not know who he was. After we were seated, several members came to us for conversation on our principles. We remained till the Assembly rose."

They had personal visits with Talleyrand and others of note. He says, further: "The object of our petition was of little consequence to me, compared to the opportunity we now had of somewhat spreading a knowledge of our principles—above all, that of the inward light or Spirit of God in every man, as a primary rule of faith and practice." He had large

meetings at his hotel for instructing an excellent class of people in his views. He says, further: "It was a turbulent time in Paris, and much more so afterwards. Several of these valuable persons fell in the reign of terror, and others are beyond my knowledge, but the remembrance of those evenings and the feeling of Divine influence that attended them will, I believe, never pass away."

The little colony of Friends at Dunkirk were constantly exposed to peril, suffering and abuse as the storm of revolution in France hourly became more furious, culminating, in 1793, in the hideous Reign of Terror. War with England seemed to be the inevitable destiny of France early in 1793, and William Rotch and his associates in part made their escape to England. He left France First month 19th, and Louis XVI., the first sovereign in the world to acknowledge the independence of the United States, was guillotined two days afterwards. William Rotch sojourned in London until Seventh month, 1794; then he returned to his home in Nantucket, where he remained until 1795, and then removed to New Bedford, where he resided ever after.

His son Benjamin next established the whale fishery at Milford Haven, in the southwestern extremity of Wales, "considered by Lord Nelson to be the finest, most safe and extensive harbor in the world." The hero of the Nile found the domain here of Sir William Hamilton very attractive. This also is the "Blessed Milford" of Imogen ("Cymbeline," III.,



WILLIAM ROTCH, JR.

2), "who is the angel of light, whose lovely presence pervades and animates the whole" ("Recollections of Seventy Years," by Mrs. John Farrar, pp. 1-60). Benjamin could not, however, escape from France until the fall of Robespierre, in the Seventh month, 1794. It may have been that the anxiety of William Rotch for his son held him back from leaving for America until assurance of his safety was made doubly sure.

Another son of William Rotch, William Rotch, Jr. (1759-1850), will always be a character of great interest to New England Friends. He was the clerk of the yearly meeting most of the time from 1788 to 1818, followed in that office by Abraham Sherman, Jr., until 1846, and he in turn by Samuel Boyd Tobey until 1867, the three clerks covering about eighty years. William Rotch, Jr., was also, with Moses Brown and others, an original trustee of the Friends School estate at Providence. William Rotch, Sr., and William Rotch, Jr., were both liberal contributors to and founders of that institution. Every one of these men refused to have their pictures painted, and concealed all they could their donations, like so many worthy founders of Harvard University, who did it not to be seen of men. William Rotch, Jr., for almost a half century, was very conspicuous in the affairs of the yearly meeting. He was a very earnest anti-slavery man, and so was his father.

He subscribed nearly one-half of the money raised in New Bedford for Friends' Academy, which was

built in 1811 upon land donated by his father. His father was the first president of the trustees, and he was himself the first treasurer of the institution.

Hero worship would have been very distasteful to that group of noble men, which included the Hazards, the Browns, the Rotches and many others; but we cannot forget the worth lost in them; we may well seek with all our hearts to emulate their careers in following the Lord Jesus Christ in the obedience of faith. The last appearance of William Rotch, Sr., on Yearly Meeting records was on a committee to set off Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting, Me., in 1813.

The whale fishery in New Bedford was greatly extended, and from 1818 became very flourishing. William Rotch and his family were prominent in this advancement.

The most effective way to portray the character of a man is by presenting him in action when he himself is unaware and unsuspecting. The exalted manhood and true grandeur of soul of William Rotch, full of the tender compassion of our divine Master, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me," will appear in the following narration:

Captain Paul Cuffee, born near New Bedford, in 1759, whose father was a slave born in Africa, and his mother an Indian, became by his own energy the owner of vessels. He was an influential member of the Society of Friends, and one of its ministers. He was a philanthropist, deeply interested in the colon-

ization of American freedmen on the west coast of Africa. He acquired quite a fortune. He lived and died at Westport, Mass.

New Bedford made an enviable record in the anti-slavery struggle. She first offered to Frederick Douglass a sympathetic, helping hand into place and power.

Paul Cuffee was at a public house in New Bedford warming himself by the fire in the travelers' room, when the landlady came to him and told him that she had prepared a separate table for him. He politely thanked her for the attention, but informed her that he had previously accepted an invitation to dine with William Rotch.

William Rotch, with some English Friends, visited Westport Meeting and accepted an invitation, extended to them all, to dine at Paul Cuffee's. They soon discovered that their host and hostess, overawed by the dignity from abroad and at home, had placed no chairs for themselves at the table.

William Rotch said that he "would not take his seat at the table unless Paul and his wife presided." He had his own gentle but unflinching way. "The company was soon seated, and an agreeable as well as bountiful dinner partaken of." ("History of New Bedford," by Daniel Ricketson, p. 255).

William Rotch was for many years one of the most venerable and conspicuous citizens of the town which he had contributed largely to create. He lived to the great age of 94, loved and respected far and

wide, and died in 1828. He said himself, in 1814, "When I take a retrospect view of this portion of my life, of the dangers to which I have been exposed and the numerous privations I have witnessed to be attributed to nothing but that superintending Power, who is ever ready to succor the workmanship of His holy hand, it fills me with astonishment and admiration, and, seeing my own worthlessness, I may exclaim, with the Psalmist, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him!" ("The N. E. Hist. Genealogical Reg.," Vol. 32, p. 394.)

NOTE.—Boston, Salem and Nantucket were at one time the three greatest commercial towns in Massachusetts. The first lighthouse in the United States was located at Brant Point, Nantucket, in 1746. (Bay State Monthly, Vol. iii, pp. 193, 198.)

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